

Thursday, January 29, 2015

WDNR Ruffed Grouse & Woodcock Advisory Committee
Meeting Notes
8:30 – 3:00, 29 January, 2015
UWSP Schmeeckle Reserve Visitors Center
2419 Northpoint Drive, Stevens Point

Update: Drum/peenting survey results

- 2014 Ruffed Grouse Drumming Survey results
 - In the north, there's no problem with the grouse population. That doesn't mean there aren't underlying habitat trends jeopardizing that population's health, though.
 - What's alarming is the trend in the central forests that's similar to what we've seen in the far south. We get the general sense that in that landscape, aspen and oak are maturing past the point where they provide good grouse habitat. The drumming survey is too broad/coarse to detect/measure any small changes in population/habitat.
 - It's a good time to think about engaging in the potential initiatives that we'll touch on later in the agenda.
 - There are huge tracts of land being converted to ag fields that used to be managed forest (given, they were pine plantations) in the central forest. Potatoes are high right now, as are other crops that can be grown on the same land. Land is also selling well for manure spreading near large dairy operations.
- 2014 UFWFS AMWO summary
 - In Wisconsin: Period 13-14 = -22.2% (significant); Period 04-14 = -0.64% (insignificant); Period 68-14 = -0.79% (significant). Things have been fairly stable in the central region over the last decade or so but the drop in 2014 made some impacts. The summary is available on the USFWS website.

Update: Young Forest Partnership

- Just got a big infusion of funding, \$5.36 million to MN, WI, and MI focal areas.

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- Two funding sources that were applied for came in. 16-member partnership group (NGOs, agencies, etc.). Goal is to try to improve habitat conditions at a landscape level. The partnership has a coordinator in Rhinelander. 1/3 Forest Service, 1/3 NRCS, 1/3 ABC. Improve habitat on private land, especially that belonging to otherwise unengaged landowners. Business meeting yesterday. They just had 22 landowners accepted through EQIP or some other means. New grant of \$350,000 came in to share with Minnesota and covers salaries as well as practices on the ground. That grant was obtained by the ABC. They also applied for RCPP, and NRCS focus program. It's a very successful 3-state effort. They still need to nail down how all the various pots of money fit together. Fortunately, the industry folks dealing with forest certification gave \$10,000 to update publications, do outreach, and put together the video recently produced by the DNR. Chewing through the first 550 landowners who responded. 250 landowners are somewhere in the process, be it contracts or agreements with partnerships or waiting for site visits. It's great that it's no single entity's program; it's collective ownership, and work can only happen with consensus. They went from a 6-county core to 21 counties. What's their greatest need? Folks to take the individual contact, go do a site visit, size up the work that needs to be done, and get that part done so the coordinator knows what direction to take. They also have an administrative need; NRCS is a bit more bureaucratic than they'd all like. Right now it's all about all hands on deck. There are only 20 people in the army right now, and a lot of landowners clamoring for attention. They're finding that people are really open to different practices (though of course there are the requisite food plot enthusiasts). The fact that it's collectively owned is a big part of why it's been so well received. It's not a big threatening government entity. And the incentives are nice, too. The reason the number of counties is lower than it could be is that they don't want to stretch themselves too thin and be unable to deliver on promises. NIFWIF money - not only allows the flexibility to use it on private lands, but includes dollars to do improvements to public properties. Broadens the public resource capability and lessens the burden on other funding sources. Big key - the deliverable is acres on the ground; it can't all go to equipment purchase. We need a Farm Bill Biologist (FBB) in Rhinelander to focus on the Young Forest Project (YFP). How would a FBB be different from the YFP coordinator? Who would they work for? The role this person fills would be to provide access to USDA software. And sometimes the practices of varying NRCS offices (willingness to hit the ground vs. more detached theory) cause bottlenecks.

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- There will be a brief on the progress that YFP has made and where they're going in the future. One of the things they'll throw in the table is DMAP. They want to know how DMAP and YFP will link and may want DMAP to serve as an umbrella (though that might not be always appropriate). YFP can incentivize DMAP and vice versa without so much blending. YFP is an entity of its own, not a part of DMAP. YFP has specific habitat recommendations, where DMAP does not. The YFP folks aren't going to exclude DMAP. If it's appropriate, they'll recommend it! They don't want to steal clientele, and they're ok with sending people to the program where they'll have the best fit. The DNR big cheeses just want the relationship defined. DMAP can qualify for EQIP as long as two tweaks are made, which Dan had to do a lot of reading to figure out (and which Kay is interested in learning more about). That's added value to DMAP.

Update: WBCI Coordinator/Forest Wildlife Habitat Specialist positions

- Previously, the Forest Wildlife Habitat Specialist had no committee responsibilities. That position is now vacant but is in the process of being filled. When it is filled, the forest wildlife habitat specialist will assume the responsibilities to the Turkey, RUGR/AMWO, and STGR advisory committees. Those species are the ones with the forest aspects to their management, though turkey bleeds over the most into the ag/farmland realm. We're still not sure how it will all shake out. The Ruffed Grouse Society hopes that ruffed grouse and woodcock would stay with the same person (minus the migratory discussions, which can stay where they are).
- Bill's position will also be refilled, but they'll attach the WBCI coordinator position (was previously a stand-alone).

Update: FFLIGHT

- The last estimate of usage was about 7,000 hits, but that was back midway through the grouse season. So, it wasn't used to the extent that we anticipated it would be, but we're still happy that it got the use it did. Is it tied to WISFIRS? Yes, that's where we pulled the aspen age class polygons. Have they talked about adding it to Pocket Ranger? Our biologists have gotten the feedback that customers want it to be a stand-alone app to increase the utility. Our issue is that IT is the workhorse, and we're hesitant to add more

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work to his pile. The wardens asked where the map layers come from, because not all public lands (state) were on there. A wildlife area from 1990 should be on there, right? But it's not. Outagamie County wardens said Wolf River Bottoms wasn't on there. I just checked, and it was, so not sure what the issue was.

Update: Kickapoo Woods Coop's Focused Landowner Engagement Concept

- It's a cooperative amongst interested landowners in the Kickapoo Valley, and Scott serves on the board. This group has really strong emphasis on outreach & education; they host workshops and woods walks and talks frequently. He's pushed the idea of targeted engagement, stemming from the Jamie Nack/Scott Craven coverts program. It's always couched in the context of training the trainer so students can engage their neighbors. You can't manage ruffed grouse on the back 40, you need to engender a landscape scale approach. Scott's not sure that Coverts has the best outcome; he's not sure landowners ever actually establish coops with their neighbors. He's pushing his own coop to focus on small watersheds and really focus the marketing using existing coop members to get some threshold of landowners represented at a fairly intensive forestry training day. The idea is not to have random acts of conservation goodness, but a Blaze of Fire that can really provide some additive value for grouse habitat. It's an appealing approach because of the social aspect. The rural culture has been largely lost; Scott's farm is surrounded by big blocks of land held mostly by absentee landowners. He wants the formats of the workshops to encourage the solidification of social relationships, so landowners and neighbors can talk with each other. Nack thinks a similar model would be great for DMAP. Long term, if we can get folks to see the value of young forest habitat and an understanding of what it takes, it'd be great.

Discussion Topic: Assessing the economic importance of grouse/woodcock hunting in WI (handout: "Economic Benefits of Publicly Accessible Land for Ruffed Grouse Hunters")

- Trout Unlimited just did an economic assessment of the impact of fly fishing on SW WI; \$1.1 billion/year. It's not direct, it includes a lot of multipliers, but they're using it to fund a huge engine with millions of dollars being dumped into trout stream habitat work. There's no real good numbers behind what good economic benefits come along with a

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rigorous grouse and woodcock hunting season, but if those numbers existed we could really do something with them. Scott wants to see the dollars hunters are spending, not an opportunity cost assessment.

- This article valued the effort hunters put into reaching a piece of public ground. That justifies the existence and support for public managed lands. What Scott thinks would be neat is to put numbers with grouse and woodcock hunting in Wisconsin. The number of days they spend afield and how much they spend on travel, lodging, equipment, etc. This would elevate the status of the sport and allow us to market habitat work and managing for grouse and woodcock to people who don't currently care, like lawmakers. Dan thinks it's well worth doing, because the idea of a wonderful day in the woods doesn't help you do anything on the ground. There's a team interest in the amount of participation on public lands and our lack of documentation of such and Jordan and Bob are working on a way of measuring that. We may want to talk to them to see how they're building their investigation. Is that in the Land Division list of research priorities? Yes, but Brian can't remember which tier it's in. We just want to better document public (state) land use in general. Or, we could just add questions to the small game hunter survey. Brian found the listing in the priorities - it's in the top tier! Heck, we should go whole hog and look at expenditures by all facets of our hunting community, as long as we're sending this survey out so widely. We can probably end the discussion here and then work on fashioning questions later once Scott has talked to Bob and Jordan.
- Kris thinks our in-house economist, Bill Walker, should be involved. Good idea - Jordan, Bill, and Bob all work hand-in-hand on this sort of thing. They can capture the social and economic responses. Look at the state park survey from 10 years ago; they've already got some metrics that we could use. We would want a broader random sample of license buyers instead of just park users, but the questions would likely be useful.

Discussion Topic: Rothschild biofuels plant and potential to benefit ES Forest Management

- Scott originally wondered if this might clear some of the unwanted woody stuff off parcels in PJO to make them more attractive to chickens.

- Kay said they got some estimates from loggers, and it ended up being expensive to do that kind of work. BUT, it's biofuel. How can we find a contractor that supplies to Rothschild? Kay got a list of 3 possible loggers that have contracts with them. Now we have to figure out tonnage on the pieces they want done so they can put out bids. Dan says they sold theirs at \$0.03/ton, and the loggers lost money and tried to back out from the contract, and their ferry was only 16 miles. He's still fighting with them to pick up what they left behind and finish the contract. At this stage, loggers don't want to deal with it, mills won't take it, and you almost have to pay to get rid of it. What's the acceptable radius from Rothschild? It depends on the mill, what their sources of fuel are, etc. At Riley, Dan said it was cheaper to pile it on site, set it on fire, and pay the firefighters to watch it. But it's cyclical. When natural gas prices are high, biofuels sell like wildfire. It's not economical further than 35 miles from the plant.
- Cortney's input - they like to contract for a huge number of acres per year; the only way it would be realistic would be to consolidate into cooperators. If there's a concentrated source and equipment can be left in one place, that might work. The plant is very particular about what it will accept (in terms of the format and dimensions of the material).
- The Driftless Area Initiative folks developed estimates of annual woody biomass harvest levels and varying radii from the plant.
- We probably won't have many more of these plants in the state (too many concerns)
- The state has a fuels for schools program that intrigues Scott. 9 public schools in the state use woody biomass to heat their schools. So does UWSP. Scott's local school just approved a \$4.5 million referendum for a new heating system. If that program could expand, schools could have staff running chainsaws locally to get cheap wood to dump into the furnace. Renewable fuels right there in the community. They might compete with the pulp industry for some of it; it's a bigger industry here than down in Scott's neck of the woods.

Discussion Topic: Developing a marketing approach for distinct G/W management areas in WI (related: Michigan GEMS)

- For the record, Scott is sick of having to copy what Michigan's already done :)
- The idea is to identify and establish some properties as grouse and woodcock hunting areas. By designating them that way, there's some assurance. Right now we've already got FFLIGHT. What MI has done to market the whole package is to develop 9 properties where there are nice maps online with cover and trail systems, parking areas, a chunk of land that allows easy access and has habitat that should assure a good chance of running into birds. The added value is that they've attached local businesses to these properties. You can get discounts at hotels, diners etc. if you show them that you went to a given GEM. Postcards, brochures, talks. Christine Thomas is the NRB member who asked whether we could do something similar. Gary already has a list of all our ruffed grouse management areas, putting us ahead of MI when they started. We have 64 properties that already have that infrastructure in place and we could just throw them online (not all of them, though). We'd have to tie in forestry, tourism, chambers of commerce - it's more for out-of-state folks than the locals. MI went from 9 properties to 14 or 15, and they're getting close to the end. They have some larger tracts of private land with interested landowners, so it's not just on public land. The only big difference is that one or two of the primary parking lots have kiosks with advertisements for the cooperators; it's supported very strongly by the local chambers of commerce. Gary just saw that MI has something else, statewide from Ironwood to Detroit, the Ironwood Trail for walking and biking. The original idea came from the UP wildlife supervisor. Kay is wondering why grouse? Because it's a species we can use to draw in people from other places. Other species wouldn't be as attractive and special. Above all, grouse generate the questions about where to go. These aren't little areas; most of them are a minimum of 3,000 acres. For the most part they're walk-in, getting people away from ATVs. They're arranged in a trail so people can move from area to area if they desire. We've got 64 areas that RGS has cooperated with in Wisconsin that we can call areas, not just small projects. If this goes forward, they're eager to work with us. They're giving money to MI to support the GEMS and ongoing management. Long-term investment potential. These GEMS have brought in people from outside the DNR, like the department of tourism, to do a lot of the coordinating.

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- Brian - we already have people that do this exact sort of marketing. Brian gets calls from people in Park Falls for data that they provide to the public via their website; they've essentially done all this legwork in the Price County area. His problem is focusing on any one single property and giving it a name. The focus really bothers him - by focusing, you create hunter expectation. We're telling them where to go, and if they don't get the experience they were expecting it falls back on us. Otherwise, from an ecological standpoint, creating these sinks and sources has been a bit more random up to this point. He'd be more in favor of a much more general "come hunt northern Wisconsin for ruffed grouse" campaign. We already gave them FFLIGHT. We don't need to put an X on the map and say "go here for grouse." Why not boost businesses across northern Wisconsin, instead of just within a limited radius of each area? Brian is generally supportive, but doesn't want us to get too specific.
- Kay thinks this would be nice even for the locals, who may not even know these areas are nearby. There are benefits not only to the out-of-state hunters, but to the locals. It's not just for grouse hunting; the roads and trails are useful to others. Brian would prefer to see an approach like the Dakotas. Come hunt pheasants in North Dakota, here's our public land and a few tiers of pheasant suitability, have at it. The warden thinks those properties will get pounded if we increase their visibility. Gary doesn't keep updated maps; he just tells people how to get there and how to contact the land manager for maps. He can keep doing that if we decide not to move forward with the initiative. But, he knows we have a great resource and it's been under-utilized up to this point. Northern Wisconsin would love to see anything that pulls people north. They could package it with fall color viewing. Brian doesn't think they're big enough properties to support large numbers of hunters.
- Courtney said people in her district were concerned about over-crowding. She's in one of the border counties, and thinks they could get hit hard since they're closer to the southern hunters than anything further north.
- Scott - our goal is to promote hunting, and increasing use on this areas could be viewed as a very positive outcome, and shouldn't be the basis of our unwillingness to pursue this initiative. Brian reiterated his hunter expectation hypothesis. Warden agrees that we should just say to come to northern Wisconsin to hunt grouse. Also mentioned doing the

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"RGMA property of the week" like the Outdoor News does for lakes on the back page of every issue.

- Gary says RGS has argued about making the RGMA data available just to members.
- Scott really does like this idea, but this discussion has him thinking it's kind of redundant with FFLIGHT. Maybe doing something more general with FFLIGHT that would engage county forests, chambers of commerce, and tourism departments would be a better idea. Scott would like to explore the broader approach of promoting northern Wisconsin. Could we somehow link chambers of commerce and businesses to FFLIGHT? A layer of businesses that they pay to be a part of? How are we going to help the non-technological people access the info? Gary says we should talk with the GEMS folks before we do anything; they can tell us what their issues and successes were. How businesses become partners. We can let local businesses do the bulk of the advertising. If you're interested in exploring this area, check out the chamber of commerce website, and they can tell you what's available nearby.
- Sounds like there's more interest in this broader approach - folks are more comfortable with that and it gets us away from some of our concerns. What are our state wildlife areas if not habitat we're sending folks to for hunting? Properties with lots of grouse habitat should be marked as such. The website lets people search properties open for hunting, but doesn't tell them anything about the species they're likely to find there. Dan says people usually want maps - that's the majority of the requests he gets. Only a few people ask for information with more depth.
- We can tell county chambers of commerce that FFLIGHT is available, and that they can provide their customers with PDF maps printed out themselves. We can list local chambers of commerce that support FFLIGHT or are cooperators, or add a layer to FFLIGHT showing businesses that have paid for us to do so. Eh, that might not be legal. We might have to leave all of that to the chambers of commerce. That would leave the maintenance up to them instead of us.
- As a group, we're advocating for this more holistic approach rather than pins on a map. Maybe the next step is to contact the department of tourism and ask how they'd like to be involved moving forward. If we show them the tools we already have, they can figure out

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how to use it. Just expand on what we already have. We'll explore that with the tourism folks and bring it back later down the road.

New Learn to Hunt Woodcock program

- Last year, Cortney attempted to put together the first LTHW program in the state, and ran into some issues. She's looking for some feedback so she can plan it out better in the future. She set up a meeting the Friday night before and did all the usual stuff before. The morning of the hunt, she had some pigeons and pointing dogs and let the students get used to shooting birds on the wing. Then they spent a few hours walking through the woods. They flushed 14 or 15 grouse and a few woodcock, all of which they missed. The biggest issue is that she didn't get her photo op with dead birds on the ground, so everybody was on the same property. And she really wanted the students to hit birds on the wing. But she had trouble get mentors, and she spent every free minute scouting, but it was so hard to find people to guide except for people who lived out of the area. Enrollment and available mentors dropped and they were only able to mentor 4 students. The birds were there that weekend, but all the people were out doing their own thing and she couldn't get any help. They ended up with 2 students out of the 4. Overall, it was ok. Next year, she wants those logistical issues to go away. Instead of pinning themselves down to one property, make it regional. Northern Wisconsin has LTHW scheduled for one weekend. Still need a single central workshop component at which the students and mentors would need to be present. That could be a Saturday, practicing with the shotguns on the same day to get them more familiar with the guns. Then, the next Saturday, hunt wherever they want as long as their mentor is with them. People can take the students where they know the birds are. That might help line up more mentors, too, which is the hardest part of the recruitment. Cortney wants mentors to know that the students aren't kids, either, and it's harder to find mentors that are comfortable with adults. She's hoping to do some advertising and offering some sort of incentive to the mentors, like \$100 that would reimburse them for their costs. She wants it to be bigger and better and to work. Would anybody here be interested in helping out? It is a primo time to be out of state, and it would be hard to move the workshops because the birds would be local rather than flights moving through. She's also a little picky! She likes broke dogs that will hold steady with all the shooting, and all the members she trusted to have solid dogs were out of state on hunting trips. Scott thinks this would be really attractive to a big group of upland bird

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hunters like RGS. If Gary let the word get out, a lot of people would be interested, but they wouldn't all have super dogs. What about something that could be taken around to banquets rather than published in the main magazine? They don't even have to advertise; they can contact members directly. What about the incentive? Not necessary for everybody. Offer a meal for the landowners so they can meet with the hunters and mentors and get some appreciation.

Update: How the WI/KY elk translocation may filter into the grouse world

- What impacts are the elk going to have on our grouse down the road? We originally drafted a plan that would support the capture and transportation of 2,250 grouse to KY in exchange for elk, but they eventually decided that they'd rather focus on habitat enhancement rather than dumping birds on unsuitable habitat. Initially they might want 50 grouse with transmitters to do some research and then maybe more after that. Right now they're essentially paying for the habitat work using the money we're giving them for the elk. Scott predicts they'll see a natural increase in grouse following the habitat improvement, but down the road we might see a request for grouse from them still.
- Shelby is wondering if they'll change their mind from the money for habitat work. No, they're held pretty closely to the agreement we have with them. The agreement would need modification in order to get grouse instead of money, even though their commissioner really wants grouse. Scott hadn't heard that the winds had changed, but Shelby heard something from one of the elk biologists that made her curious. Do they want brown/red phase grouse instead of grey phase grouse? Because the brown/red phase grouse are what they already have down there, and grey grouse might not satisfy them. KY isn't telling us what to do with their elk, so can we tell them what to do with our grouse? We just don't want them dumped into a mature northern hardwood stand surrounded by coal mines, because that wouldn't make us feel good. I'm sure their biologists don't want their elk staggering around in the snow 50 miles from a positive case of CWD. Dhuey doesn't think color phases should matter at all. In the event KY desires to pursue translocation of ruffed grouse, WDNR agrees to oversee the logistics. Following the creation of sufficient habitat in KY, the translocation of up to 2,250 birds at a rate of \$250/bird. We never planned to trap grouse right away because we're at the low point in the cycle.

RUGR/AMWO Management Plan

- Does the DNR have a ruffed grouse management plan? Scott thought so, but the copy he had from 1995 had never been approved! We're already embarking on a GPCH management plan and another NRB member has requested something for pheasant. It's a big time commitment to produce something meaningful. Scott's hoping the new Adrian can focus on something like a grouse management plan. If they're in charge of the upland species we think they'll be, this is the only plan they'd have on their desk. There's some strength in plans if they're done right. A plan should be something you can give a landowner to convince them that the work you want to do on their land is a good idea. Scott thinks there would be huge value to a plan for RUGR and AMWO because they're habitat specialists, and it would help strategically direct dollars to the most valuable habitat work. We have the best of what's left in this country for grouse, or at least in the lower 48, and that brings a lot of hunters here. Brian thinks we should have habitat plans that address species, vs. species plans that address habitat. Maybe we should recommend that to the WPT; let's think about ecosystem plans funded by the Habitat Stamp! Dan would like not having a state wildlife action plan that differs greatly from the individual species management plans.

Conflicts between trappers and hunters

- It's more of a perceived conflict between the wolf trappers and the upland bird hunters. Dan thinks it's way more than perceived - lots of different incidents came through his door. This might be keeping out-of-state grouse hunters from coming to Wisconsin because they're worried their bird dogs will get caught in wolf traps. There's interest in moving the wolf season (if/when it returns). It's bad PR for trapping, and if the hunters only get one animal, they want to get it later in the season when its fur is in better condition. Some bad things happen with inexperienced trappers (improperly placed sets, either because they mistake dog scat for wolf scat or because they want their sets placed conveniently so they can just drive along and check them from their truck). Our warden is a wolf trapper, and he said it takes time to set quality traps, and the traps aren't cheap. His are \$26 each. People are applying for a tag that they'll transfer to an established trapper to get a wolf off their property, you can designate anybody to check a trap, and people will throw their traps at somebody who has a tag (here, use mine too). Trapping is the quickest way to get a wolf, and they throw those

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traps out quick and in large quantities (up to 30-40 traps/trapper). Dan has seen 100-trap lines in the national forest. The person who has the tag has to be the one to set it, and some trappers are breaking that law (the ones Dan knows of). Dan actually mentioned closing the forest to dry land traps during the period when upland bird hunters are out in their greatest numbers, reopening once the gun deer season is over. It's user conflict. Brian is looking at the survey they sent out. There is a question on the cc hearings to delay the wolf trapping season. Gary was working on an NRB question to move the season for upland trapping overall, because there are two conflicting dates right now (one for wolf, and then a week later another for coyotes). Trappers think there should be one opening, and for it to be later for a lot of reasons. The only conflict is that the coon season would also be involved, because it isn't fair to say no trapping for one group when another group can still be out. Granted, coon sets are different from wolf or coyote sets. Our warden also doesn't think a prime pelt is an issue (they might be better in October than too much later). Also, later in the season, the harder it is to set traps because the ground is frozen. Then more people will want to be hunting the wolves because there won't be overlap with the deer season (but they can take vacation to go hunt in October!). It was a much bigger issue this past year than before, and the out of state hunters are keenly interested. Hopefully with the relisting, this issue can be addressed so if/when they're delisted again. Brian says the dates are set by the legislature and won't change, but Gary said there are some rumblings outside the DNR, which is how it's going to have to happen.

Better coordination of RUGR/AMWO management in Wisconsin

Habitat Stamp update

- This isn't a new idea; there are other versions in other states that have been around for years. The original meeting was with folks who had a stake in the current stamps: PF, NWTF, WWA, RGS, and a few other individuals. They made contacts with legislators on the basis that this would be a simplification with no added taxes. About 2 years ago, the conservation round tables started up, and they brought forward 4 different options/ideas. Consensus was that one plan should move forward. They came up with a proposal for one wildlife habitat stamp (vs. three), \$5 per person (lower than the other three), that every trapper/hunter would purchase. One of the issues was that if you just have one stamp, you're done! You don't have to pick between stamps and reduce your opportunities. A few more

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groups got involved (or more involved). They said that this stamp would guarantee that the existing stamps wouldn't lose money. At just \$5, every pot of money would actually go up. Instead of turkey stamp, you'd have the forest habitat group which the grouse people would now contribute to, and a grass stamp would cover the pheasant people, and deer pitch in for everything. The duck people were worried about the money going to Canada, but that wasn't taken away (and was in fact increased). The steering committee didn't want to reduce anything. The biggest concerns are that they don't have ownership in specific programs. Waterfowl people would still have a say and a committee, yes, turkey would be absorbed, but a couple of groups didn't want to give up their ownership. They've got ways to get this through pretty easily, but they want everybody to be on board. They're still working on it! Gary still wants everybody to be able to buy in. It's the only way we're going to get more habitat work on the ground and still get it through the legislature, because fee increases are so frowned upon now. The big plus is the deer hunters, who never pitched in before. Deer are habitat generalists and would benefit from pretty much all the work being done. Dhuey thinks we need to get the people who weren't previously sitting at the table to throw their weight behind it. It was an NRB question on last year's spring hearing questionnaire, and Gary thought that was the solution. We might even be able to reduce the cost of the patron license! Anyway, it's not dead, but there have been some recent stumbling blocks that they're working through. 30% forest, 30% wetland, 30% grassland, and the remaining 10% for hunter recruitment/retention/education. We could have charged more, but that \$5 price tag is so much more attractive, and still gets us more than twice what the current three stamps bring in each year.

Partner updates

- RGS: Drummer Fund got a lot of applications as is the trend; last year they gave out over \$62,000. They're anticipating the same amount or more this year. All the applications are in and they'll be making their recommendations for approval early next week, after which point he'll be making his phone calls. A big chunk is being used as match for grants for the YFP. \$120,000 for the RCPP over the next 4-5 years, a lot of which comes from the Drummer Fund. Contributing biologist time as in-kind service. American Woodcock Society is now a year old; people wishing to be charter members have 2 more days to sign up. Chapters are popping up, and they have over 1,000 new members in just a year. Obviously a lot of them are dual members. They're putting a big chunk of change into the

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woodcock satellite telemetry project going on right now. 5 went out last year, 4 on one singing ground, and 3 didn't stay in the central flyway. Those maps may need to be revised! They bought 20 more collars and they have a biologist down there putting them on in the southern part of the country through the University of Arkansas. You can follow the birds on the website with a delay of a few days so you can't track them for hunting, and they go offline during the hunting season. One bird banded at the Tamarack Wildlife Area in MN in early October moved almost daily and flew super erratically and finally took off in the middle of November. These birds aren't really leaving an area right away, so flights might stick around for a couple of days. In the last year they picked up and traded in their old habitat equipment, and they have a much better new machine with really good support from the vendor. Increase in folks coming into the market; two different guys have started in Medford and Ladysmith doing young forest work. Callie Birch has a list of all the contractors available to do work; can also contact Jeremy.

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Public input

- Notes